Historical Society of Palm Desert

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The Hourglass

Community
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DESERT PALM OASES

By James W. Cornett

Edited from the book and the speech
By V. Folkers - Curator HSPD

Over 25,000 wild palms grow in oases from Death Valley to the tip of the Baja Peninsula. An aerial view shows them as spots of lush green in an otherwise arid landscape. Pedro Fages, a Spanish soldier, discovered an oasis on a trek across the desert toward San Diego in 1782. He took a route through the Carrizo Corridor and came upon a water hole and 3 or 4 tall palms. About 65 years later, Lt. Col. William Emory happened upon the same oasis, but it now supported 20 to 30 palms.....a tenfold increase. Seeds of these palms eventually found their way to Belgium; but it was a German who applied the name of *Washingtonia* after America's first president.

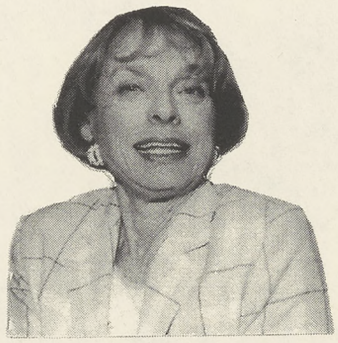
The desert fan palm is the tallest and largest of the myriad variety of palms. The dead leaves stay on the trunk for life (100 years in the wild) and are known as the "petticoat." Where there is an adequate water supply and warm temperatures, this palm grows fast for 20 years and then slows down. Because of global warming, palms can be found over 300 miles north of their original sites. If the temperature rises only one degree, that's all it takes to favor palms over other plants. The greatest enemy of this variety seems aimed at the petticoat which sometimes burns, is wind blown, or is removed by flash floods. The giant palm beetles are also considered a palm enemy, but Cornett doesn't advocate getting rid of them. They start out as a maggot, grow to the size of an adult thumb, and are shiny black when they mature. You have undoubtedly seen them, but they are more prevalent in the wild.

Palms have no growth rings like trees. They are, in fact, in the grass family - so "palm tree" is faulty terminology. Inside the trunk are hundreds of bunches of vascular tissue which carry water and nutrients up and down the trunk. The growth takes place at the top, and if the tip is injured the palm dies. That is why newly planted palms have the leaves tied up -- it's a good way to protect the tender heart. One palm can produce up to five million flowers, which have both male and female parts. Carpenter bees bite the flowers off looking for nectar, and only about 10% of the flowers develop into fruit. Palms take from 12 to 15 years to reach maturity. Birds and animals are most often the dispersers of its seed. Each leaf stays green for a year, then it dries and becomes part of the petticoat. The stalks of the leaves grow a wicked set of teeth-like thorns until the palm is over 20 feet tall. Above that height, the stalks are free of thorns. It is believed that this thorn feature evolved to protect palms from hungry wooly mammoths in prehistoric times. That gives us an indication of the probably size of these monsters.

There is abundant evidence that Indians visited oases, and often established permanent settlements in and near them. Because they provided water, food, material resources, and cooler temperatures than the desert, they were perfect for habitation. Cahuilla Chief Francisco Patencio tells the legend of how the first palm was formed: *A head man of the Sungrey (legendary ancestors of the Cahuilla) said that at his death he would be a palm called Moul'. He stood up straight and the trunk began to form around him, and leaves grew out of the top of his head.*

- from Stories & Legends of the Palm Springs Indians

Palms host many critters which may or may not be welcome around your home. Jim Cornett reminds us that domestic palms should be pruned to umbrella shape, making sure all the seed pod stalks are removed. He says with vehemence, that pruning to the inverted cone shape is nothing short of butchering. Even if you should decide to leave the desert fan palm petticoat in tact, it would be desirable to have the flowers/fruit removed. Contrary to popular belief, pruning slows the growth of palms.



24th Annual - FOUNDER'S DAY

Who is the lovely lady, an attorney no less, who opened a practice in the Coachella Valley in the early l960s? She can definitely be listed in the "Pioneer" category, because she knew and served the people who formed this valley. That was "then", and "now" she continues to practice law in the field of estate-planning, and also to give of her seemingly boundless energy and selfless generosity. This is how and why she was chosen to receive the Founder's Day award which was presented at a public celebration at Palm Desert city hall on May 15th.

Jean Ann Hirschi - This is Your Story

Born in Texas, she briefly attended the University of Texas until she was involved in an automobile collision at the age of l9. The resultant damage to her spinal cord didn't dim her optimistic spirit and personality. UCLA could accommodate students in wheelchairs, so she moved to California. After earning a bachelor's degree in political science, she went on to graduate as one of six women in a class of 80 from UCLA's law school. With two male graduates she opened a general law office on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. Jean Ann never dwelt on what she couldn't do -- but only on what she wanted to do.

A 1961 news article tells of a cocktail party hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hirschi and their daughter for 70 guests. It was held on the patio, featured a Santos catered buffet, a floral and candle decorated pool, strolling musicians, and dancing under the stars. The party served as a house warming for their new home on Bel Air Street, and also to honor the guests of the Desert Patch Hotel which Mrs. Hirschi had acquired in 1959. At this time the senior Hirschis were hoping that their daughter would decide to move to the desert and set up an office here.

Ms. Hirschi went on to become the first female president of the Desert Bar Association in l974. She was honored by the City of Palm Desert with the Athena Ward for her commitment to charities and other community activities. Many other local organizations have recognized her contribution to their special causes.

Jean Ann says that she doesn't like being the "center of attention" -- but how else can we show our appreciation of who she is and what she's accomplished but to put her into that position? We are happy that she agreed to be the recipient of the Historical Society's Founder's Day award for the year 2005. Undoubtedly her mind wandered back to the law services she rendered to Cliff Henderson in the early days of the formation of Palm Desert.

2nd Annual - PALM AWARDS

The City of Palm Desert, wishing to recognize its unsung heroes, joined with the Society in honoring the citizens who have served the community in specific ways. These include commitments to serve with volunteer time, expertise, and finances. Plaques for the following Palm Award recipients were provided by the City of Palm Desert.

- Edwin Stempler, M.D. - for his abiding dedication to Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the Desert in the service of youngsters in need of mentoring.
  - his involvement with Palm Desert Rotary Club as a community out-reach to various organizations and individuals
- Michael Russell - for his commitment to Animal Samaritans as board president & 40 hours each week of volunteer time; also, serves Pegasus Riding Academy, Coachella Valley Assoc. of Govts., and the Animal Humane Society.
- Phyllis Harkins - has co-chaired the Alzheimer's Associations's annual Memory Walk for the past 6 years; as owner of Desert Restaurant Supply she cultivates support from the business community and is responsible for logistical aspects and public relations for the event.

Thank you to the Founder's Day/Palm Awards committee for hours of hard work in coordinating this event: Joyce White, Anne Tuttle, Pat Scullly, Dan Callahan, Dick Folkers, Helene Harrison, Kent Smith, Harold Bird, Hal Rover, Jan Holmlund, Bonnie Bowie, Adele Ruxton, and Bj Callahan.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

1916 Flood - created the Whitewater Channel from Cathedral City to Point Happy.
1976 Flood - created a 20-foot wide river of mud down Alamo Drive (and) a 300-foot long rip in the dike east of Highway 74. The dike was built in l932 and is l5-feet high.

SPRING LUNCHEON

A record number of members and guests assembled at Shadow Mountain Club & Resort on April 20 to soak up the historical ambiance, to enjoy a choice of two great entrees, and to hear Jim Cornett expound on the "Secrets of the Oasis Palm." Kay Young and Anne Tuttle took care of all the details, making for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. The author of the weekly flora & fauna column in the Desert Sun, Mr. Cornett took us for an armchair hike through palm oases with breath-taking slides. From his studies of the desert fan palm he garnered information to give a fascinating talk. By the time he finished we were all inclined to take up hiking to 'go and see' for ourselves. Four books were offered for sale and were autographed by James Cornett: *Desert Palm Oasis, How Indians Used Desert Plants, Indians and Desert Animals, The Roadrunner;* all of which are must-reading for desert lovers.

Philip Ferranti on HIKING

April's community service talk at Society headquarters brought in a wall-to-wall crowd. Phil talked from his vast hiking experience, showed slides of trail information, answered questions, and offered his two books: *I20 Great* Hikes and *Hiking! The Ultimate Natural Prescription for Health & Wellness.*

Interest in hiking is growing in the valley; in fact, membership in the Coachella Valley Hiking Club is increasing by leaps and bounds. Their application takes into consideration your physical endurance, themes of interest, choice of frequency and duration of events, food preferences, etc. They even offer skiing, biking, canoeing, snowshoeing, rafting, and camping.

May's community service meeting featured **"Voices of the Flute" by Ernest Siva**. With a collection of five flutes varying in age and pitch, Mr. Siva demonstrated the sound of American Indian culture, including our local Cahuilla tribe. Music expresses not only spirituality, but also joy and humor. To produce the haunting sounds of the flute was a privilege relegated to the men in the tribe, not to women. With a dried gourd filled with fan palm seeds, a low and melodious singing voice, and a few dance steps, he took us into another world -- one more simple and care-free than our own.

Heritage Keepers is a non-profit dedicated to saving Southern California's endangered Indian cultures, languages, traditions, history and arts. To join, send $25/50/l00/300/2000 to: Dorothy Ramon Learning Center, Inc. - P.O. Box l5l0 - Banning, CA 92220

ED MULLINS MEMORIAL ANNUAL PICNIC

Thanks to Carol Cole, Anne Tuttle, the Keedy kids -- Barbara & Doug, and everyone else who got involved, this year's picnic was a resounding success. It retained that "family atmosphere" because the Mullins clan, City officials, C.O.D. people, pioneers, members, and guests all came together to chat and eat burgers like those Bob Keedy served in his restaurant. This is the type of event that's relaxing and sends you home looking forward to next year's.

NEW MEMBERS and ELEVATED CLASSIFICATIONS

Patron
Jean Ann Hirschi

Contributing
Dr. Maria C. Sheehan

Supporting
Walter & Kay Eichenhofer
Joe & Dorothy McKenna
Alvin & Euleen Rickard

Family
Doug & Maureen Boren
Gretchen Clark/Ted Giwoff
Randy & Kim Housken
Bob & Vera Pitchford
Richard L. Twedt

Individual
Betty Crockett
Douglas Dorsey
Pam Hearne
Jan King
Martin, Kermit
Harriett S. Oberhaus
Evelyn Voth
Jim Walters

JULIAN "BUD" LESSER

He was here one day and gone the next....he held a unique place in our lives....he retains that place in our memories. You read about his life in the Fall 2004 issue of the Hourglass. He was an engaging conversationalist with an enviable knack for writing outside the traditional box. Bud's abiding interest in Jewish history in the U.S. qualified him to write for related publications. A pioneer film producer in Hollywood, Sol Lesser completed over l00 films during his career. Irving Lesser worked from New York City in the Roxy Theater with a screen four stories tall and elaborate stage shows. Sol and Irving were his father and his uncle. In bragging about his antecedents, Bud says these activities sprang from imaginative genes. Here at the Society, we miss Bud and his imagination.

DONATIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES

Harold & Myrna McCormick	Two items on permanent loan status: - personal scrapbook of Myrna McCormick, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Eldorado Country Club - 1972 book, "Paintings of Dwight D. Eisenhower"
Hal Rover	- 1975 Gerald Ford medal in a plastic case - I-20-73 Richard Nixon coin in a plastic case - early 70s set of cufflinks of U.S. Congress
Dick Folkers	- list of desert native plants - James Cornett book, "Desert Palm Oasis"
Tom Kennedy	loan of materials regarding the Kennedy family's agricultural business in the east valley during the 1940s, 50s and 60s
Betty Crockett	- large collection of Shadow Mountain Club material - issues of Sun Spots from the l950s & 1960s
Doris Ellis	- l970 "The Game of Palm Desert", like the Monopoly board game, distributed as a business promotion
Jan King	- four news items regarding her work for Bob Hope - March l962 black & white photo of Bob Hope

SOCIETY-SPONSORED SCHOOL TOURS

These events are conducted by Hal Rover, Bob Green, Adele Ruxton and John Marman. Programs for second grade students were presented as follows:

Sacred Heart School	May l3	2 classes	47 students
Washington Charter School	May l7, l8, l9	6 classes	ll5 students
Lincoln Elementary School	May 24, 25, 26	7 classes	l26 students

On May 24 a representative of the Historical Society was invited to an "Evening of Excellence" sponsored by the Desert Sands Unified School District. A "Certificate of Recognition" was awarded to the Society for outstanding serviced to the children of the district. The school tours provide information about the history of Palm Desert and about the history of firefighting. It engenders an appreciation for the preservation of the past and how it affects the present and the future of local citizens.

DOCENTS / VOLUNTEERS

Jean Ernst reports that on March 11 volunteers heard a very informative talk by Deborah Schwartz, Palm Desert Public Art Coordinator. Besides distributing literature and showing slides, she explained how the program developed, how it works, its financing, and future plans. There are temporary art pieces exhibited on El Paseo's median, and many permanently placed works of art in various places around the city, such as the library, the city park and along Fred Waring Drive.

At a May 6 meeting various aspects of the operation of the Society were explained, including increased activity and community involvement. Reports were given by Bob Green, John Marman, Joyce White, Hal Rover, Anne Tuttle and Dan Callahan. Increased traffic to the museum is attributed to more publicity and flying the flags out front.

A seasonal start-up meeting is planned for September, an information meeting in November, and an outing to a neighboring museum in January. Thanks to active docents: Rose & Brett Romer, Laura McCandless, Gloria Petito, Colleen Tebeau, and Lyn Manor. Special event people: Adele Ruxton, Dick Folkers, Jeanne Ahrens, Carol & Sheila Scanny. Occasional workers: Helene Harrison, Bonnie Bowie, John & Madonna Marman and Harold Bird. The newest person who has offered to help is Harriett Oberhaus. Jean Ernst, who chairs this committee, says, "I fill in when someone has to cancel. I've met some interesting people there." You can add your name to the volunteer list for the up-coming season by calling Anne at 346-6588.

Ice Cream is the ultimate treat on a hot summer day. The very first ice cream was made without sugar and eggs and was an unexpected by-product of operations involving the use of ice to cool liquids. Even before rebellious American colonists gained independence from England, wealthy families were enjoying ice cream much like the modern product. Mr. Hall of New York City invested considerable capital in the first recorded ice cream company and advertised his wares for sale on June 8, l786. - "How It Started" by Webb Garriso

MARTINEZ MOUNTAIN

By Carl Bock & Joel Baldwin

Edited by V. Folkers - Curator, HSPD

Thanks to Tom Kennedy for providing this data

The Santa Rosa Mountain chain flanks the southwest side of the Coachella and Imperial Valleys. The major valley was once occupied by the Golf of California which structurally depressed it into a trough which now contains the Salton Sea. Martinez Mountain is located on the east side of the Santa Rosas. It is one of the highest peaks in an outlying chain of irregular hills that is separated from the main rib of the Santa Rosas by a lowland that extends from Palm Springs to the northwest end of the Salton Sea. Martinez is l964 meters high with elevations of less than l20 meters to the east.

It was not discovered until the l950s and 60s that a major rockslide happened in the history of Martinez Mountain. In l977 and l980 two technical reports were written about this rock avalanche, and only then could it be compared with previously researched slides. With a displacement volume of approximately 240 million cubic meters, this avalanche ranks as the second largest known landslide on the North American continent. It was, in fact, one of the largest in the world.

When did the Martinez Mountain rockslide occur? All that has been discovered tells us that it was prehistoric. This also holds true for one somewhat larger that happed at Blackhawk, which is located on the north side of the San Bernardino Mountains. Two extremely huge prehistoric slides took place in Switzerland and Iran.

How did it happen? From what geologists have bèen able to determine, the mechanism of sliding was seismic activity. A major fault along the east flank of the Santa Rosa Mountains was associated with the slide and ground-water evidence located it in the vicinity of Oasis, California, so they named it the Oasis Fault. Engineering geologists determined that the slide has current significance in regard to public safety in urban planning.

During the hiking seminar by Philip Ferranti, slides of Martinez Mountain were shown. The area had some beautiful scenery and fairly easy trails. You might want to get his book and check out this rockslide for yourself.

Memorial Day
THE AMERICAN FLAG

The correct folding of the American flag involves 13 steps. You probably thought it was to symbolize the original 13 colonies, but we learn something new every day! Following is an explanation of what each fold means:

1) the flag is a symbol of life
2) is a symbol of the belief in eternal life
3) in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing the ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of the country to attain peace throughout the world
4) represents the weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in time of war for His divine guidance
5) a tribute to the country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our Country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong"
6) for where people's hearts lie. It is with their heart that they pledge allegiance to the flay of the United States of America, and the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all
7) a tribute to its Armed Forces, for it is through them that protect their country and their flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of their republic
8) a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day
9) a tribute to womanhood and mothers; for it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded
10) a tribute to the father, for he too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of their country since they were first born
11) represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies in the Hebrews' eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
12) represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in the Christians' eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit
13) the stars are uppermost reminding them of their nation's motto, "In God We Trust"

When completely folded and tucked in, it looks like a cocked hat which was worn by soldiers under Gen. George Washington; also, by sailors and marines under Capt. John Paul Jones.

YARD SALE IN THE FALL

Yes, we are going to do it again! It has become the annual yard sale fund-raiser, which we hold at the historic fire house. Thanks to Waste Management of the Desert, we have a large enclosed bin in our backyard in which to put items that we collect. Already we have gathered some great things for the sale, and we will continue to amass more over the summer months. Our need is for **GOOD, CLEAN, SALEABLE** discards; please, no clothing or shoes. You can leave your donations in the backyard, or call 346-6588 and leave a message if you need a pick-up or want to discuss your potential donation....we will get back to you as soon as possible. The Society is a non-profit organization, so you can request a receipt to be used as a non-cash charitable deduction on your income tax. Mention our sale to your family and friends, and tell garage sale holders that we will pick up whatever they don't sell.....which is a win-win situation.

From This Day Forward

One evening, impressed by a meat entrée my wife had prepared, I asked, "What did you marinate this in?" She dropped her fork and went into a long explanation about how much she loves me and how life wouldn't be the same without me.

I must have looked confused by her response, because she inquired, "Well, what did you ask me?"
When I told her what I had asked, she laughed and said, "I thought you asked me if I would marry you again!"
Later, as she was cleaning up in the kitchen, I called out, "Hey, hon, would you marry me again?"
Without hesitation she replied, "Vinegar and barbecue sauce."

Have a great summer!

Whether you are staying here to brave out the summer heat, or whether you are headed for cooler climes, we wish you a happy and healthy summer. Your days will have more meaning and your memories will be more clear if you:

Do more than exist; live. *Do more than read; absorb.* *Do more than think; ponder.*
Do more than touch; feel. *Do more than hear; listen.* *Do more than talk; say something.*
Do more than look; observe. *Do more than listen; understand.* *(John H. Rhoades)*

- Editor, Ginny Folkers

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